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Creative Discussion

A Statement of Method for Leaders and Members of Discussion Groups and Conferences

by
ALFRED DWIGHT SHEFFIELD

(Third Edition, Revised and Enlarged)

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Methods for Leaders and Members of Discussion Groups

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ALFRED DWIGHT SHEFFIELD

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CREATIVE DISCUSSION

Discussion is coming to be recognized as a special art of dialogue that expresses the group-thinking of persons in conference. As such, it shows variations according to the kinds of outcome which the conferring groups may be seeking. The desired outcome may be of an immediately practical sort, as where a board is deciding on a course of action to be carried out collectively, or where a joint committee is adjusting a conflict of interests between various parties to a situation. Again, the desired outcome may be of an educational sort, as where the members of a study-circle thresh out the different aspects of an issue, and help one another to think their way through to socially sound convictions. Both kinds of group concern require a cooperative technique for group-thinking—a technique which in essentials is the same for both, but which develops certain tactical differences according as the immediate aim is group action or revised personal attitudes looking to future action as personal or group occasions may arise.

The present pamphlet is addressed to leaders and members of groups that meet with the second of these aims. Discussion, in any such group, is really a little venture in cooperative education. It brings together people who are out of touch, perhaps, with books, but who can pool their thinking, as occasions arise, to study their own life situations. Organized discussion, in fact, is a new method for winnowing wisdom out of experience. One does not learn from experience simply by having experiences. Experiences, when left to make their own impressions, are quite as apt to miseducate a person as to educate him. They may leave him conventional, or biased, or morbid. To learn from an experience one must see it from different points of view, because it always shows a situation in which various interests are at stake—interests that appeal differently to different peo-

ple. That is where *group* study helps. Each member of the group has his or her special sensitiveness to considerations which the others would slight or overlook. Together they form a little cross-section of the current thought on the situation. Their give and take about it sharpens it up as a picture of human purposes and circumstances from which each really learns about life.

Discussing to Get Somewhere

An occasion that arose in Harvard College a few years ago showed effectively how discussion can give this educative turn to experience. Early in 1922 it became apparent that there was a growing feeling among students, instructors, and alumni that the number of Jewish students in the college was becoming undesirably large. This feeling doubtless represented: (1) the natural dislike with which the predominating "Anglo-Saxon" clientele of the college found itself penetrated by a distinct ethnic group; (2) the special prejudice which "society" bears against Jews. The non-Jewish majority saw reason to fear that the social reputation of the college might become affected in a way to cause a falling-off of "Anglo-Saxon" students. It believed itself to have some ground for its fear in the experience of New York, where (according to figures for 1917-1918) the Jews, with a percentage of 25 in the general population, had reached a percentage of 38.5 in the total enrollment of New York colleges and professional schools. The matter was taken under advisement by the authorities, who appointed for the purpose a special committee of thirteen, with three Jewish members. Meanwhile the students held informal discussions, in which representative Jews and non-Jews threshed out the meaning of the issue for their college life. These discussions, as one looks back on them, show instructively the stages by which group-thinking "gets somewhere."

One should note at the outset that the two kinds of group-thinking—the kind aiming at group action and the kind aiming

at mutual education—were here going on side by side. The special committee appointed by the authorities had to think out a plan to be carried out by the college. The matter was plainly controllable by some policy touching the choice and retention of boys as "college material." The members of the committee were selected as persons who could speak for the various claims, desires, and sensibilities that would be involved in any change of policy. Their discussion was directed at some official solution that would satisfy these various conflicting desires. The student group, on the other hand, had no official control in the matter. The importance of the issue for them lay in its challenge to each undergraduate to develop his own social attitudes and views. Their discussion was directed toward a mutual testing of the social values that were severally cherished.

The first step in their thought-process was to see the roots of the matter in their own experience. As students in the college they were faced with a situation. There was an unpleasant race-consciousness in all their activities and relations as undergraduates. Jewish students were feeling themselves discriminated against, and non-Jewish students could hardly make any choice resulting in social or competitive preference for non-Jews without feeling that it was being imputed to prejudice. Outstanding as factors in this situation were evidently: (1) the social standards of college clubs that represented a long tradition of membership drawn from privileged families of English stock; (2) the large number of Jewish "day" students from poor families—students who took little part in college "activities" and who in many instances were socially crude; (3) the democratic tradition of the college as a place of equal opportunity for all comers.

The second step in their thinking was to see just where their problem lay. The points of conflict in the situation naturally showed themselves in the different lines of action that were suggested as possible ways out of it. They appeared even more clearly in the reasons whereby these possibilities of action seemed desirable to the respective disputants who suggested

them. Thus from the various points of view the following proposals were urged:

i. The admission committee could close the freshman enrollment to Jewish candidates when the Jewish percentage should reach a certain point, say twenty per cent.
ii. The admission committee could entertain all Jewish applications, but pick out only the best Jewish candidates.
iii. Jewish students and alumni could coöperate to weed out from the college Jews felt to be socially undesirable.
iv. The college might simply take measures to promote better intercourse between its Jewish and non-Jewish students, trusting the present race-feeling to pass with the falling-off of Jewish immigration.

It is instructive to note here that these "action" proposals received different kinds and degrees of consideration in the two kinds of groups that were discussing them. They differed, to begin with, in the way they pointed the responsibility for control of the situation. The first two put the responsibility on the admission committee; the third put it on one stratum of the college clientele—namely, the Jewish students and alumni; only the fourth involved a bid for participation by each and every student. Both of the groups discussing these proposals were concerned to do sound social thinking. But the committee-group, looking toward official action, naturally sought the tests of its thinking in the workableness and consistency of measures which would be construed as expressing Harvard ideals. The student group, looking toward a clarifying of their personal views, naturally dwelt on the tests which would be occasioned for the consistency of their own attitudes and ideas. What, for example, would a student mean by "socially undesirable" as applied to a fellow collegian? What forms of "better intercourse" would accord with his best considered standards and habits? Such questions, as pursued in an educational discussion, would show the first need of each disputant to lie in an inability to agree with himself.

The reasons offered for these various proposals showed that there were several distinct interests at stake in the situation—

interests to which the conferring spokesmen were differently sensitive. As first professed, these interests appeared in the following clashes of attitudes and ideals:

a. "Harvard should be kept Anglo-Saxon."

This meant that a clearly predominating number of its students should be such as were Anglo-Saxon either by birth or by "assimilation."

a'. "America is changing in its ethnic make-up, and Harvard should change with it. Race qualities that strike the Anglo-Saxon mind as 'unassimilable' may be the very qualities that Jews can best contribute to the new American culture.

b. "The college should maintain its social tone as a home of gentlemanly manners."

This meant that it could absorb only a limited number of "day" students from homes only recently emerged from ghetto life.

b'. "A college is not a social club. Its aim is to serve and encourage boys from every walk of life who will pursue studies with a maximum of profit."

c. "The college should have the best intellectual material to work on."

This meant that it should take students with brains and zeal for study, regardless of their racial or social backgrounds.

c'. "The best human material is that which displays fine personality as well as facility at book-knowledge. Harvard aims to develop not 'grinds' but men of social leadership."

d. "Harvard should live up to its democratic tradition of offering equal opportunity to all comers."

This meant giving equal treatment to all candidates, seeing Jew and Gentile as alike *Americans*.

d'. "College democracy requires that Jewish-American students should all find domicile among the colleges of the country, not that they have the right to throng into the half-dozen colleges which happen to be near and popular."

e. "The college should not compromise with racial intolerance."

Any policy looking towards special treatment for a racial group would mean an official recognition of race prejudice.

e'. "Unwelcome numbers is itself a cause of racial bad feeling. If their increase causes Gentile students to go elsewhere, Harvard will have cut off its own opportunity to teach tolerance to those who need it most."

The next step for these college conferees was manifestly to meet the question: "How shall we deal with our differences?" The problem before them represented difficulties of two sorts: (1) disagreements as to matters of fact; (2) incompatibilities in matters of desire. If their discussions were to reach a profitable outcome in readjusted attitudes and actions, they would need help in their thinking—help from factual data, and help from a mutual probing of their own states of mind, for it is of the essence of discussion to set the whole matter in the light of a social laboratory, calling for self-knowledge and a technique of human relations.

As to matters of fact, it became evident that no responsible figures existed by which the actual percentage of Jews at Harvard in 1922 could be gauged. There were only "club statistics"—which, as has been said, "have deadly exactitude and no accuracy." More important, however, were figures that would invite a view of the Harvard situation in its larger setting—as part of an educational problem for America. There are over 800 colleges in the country, and Jews form not over five per cent of their total enrollment. If Jewish students were distributed on a five per cent basis throughout America, there would be no such problem as appeared in Cambridge. But the Jewish population of America is massed within a few urban centers. Harvard, Columbia, and a half dozen other colleges fall within this "zone of Jewish pressure" and by their open-door policy towards all qualified comers have naturally drawn a major quota of the Jewish students of the country. Testimony of this sort had the effect of stimulating further suggestions as to ways out of the difficulty—suggestions which now

sought to meet the situation in the whole college field. It was proposed, for example, that some intercollegiate agency could be set up for guiding Jewish candidates to good colleges with low Jewish percentages, and that one or two Jewish colleges could be established at the larger centers of Jewish population. Such proposals, however, looked to action outside the field of influence of these discussions. Harvard had its own adjustments to make, and the present disputants had a part to play in basing the college practices on attested facts instead of popular fictions. There was, for example, the much repeated notion that Jews are ethnically "unassimilable." On this point they turned to Professor R. B. Dixon. His testimony as an ethnologist was that—

> "In racial affiliation, the roundheaded Ashkenazim (East European Jews) are closely related to the majority of the whole population of Europe today, which is, throughout its Central and Eastern portions and including a large part of France, fundamentally of this Alpine type."

Other specialists made it clear that differences between individuals of the same race were greater than the differences between races, so that no person could be prejudged as "unassimilable" by his race alone. On the other hand, there were grounds for recognizing a "psychic type" as something that by force of numbers grows disturbing to other types. Certain coeducational colleges restricted their enrollment of women for reasons that ran remarkably parallel to the reasons advanced for the restricting of Jews.

By thus putting their views to the test of wider information, the group members reduced their differences on points of fact. There were special difficulties, however, in points of attitude and feeling. The Jewish spokesmen, taking the prejudice as something that touched their self-respect, were disposed to treat it not analytically, as a social force first of all to be accurately understood, but moralistically as an intolerance to be torn out of Gentile hearts. "The Jew," they said, "is a problem only to those who make him so. We are all Americans; Harvard is an American college. To discuss proposals here

for special treatment of any group is to repudiate our Americanism." This, of course, was an unconscious effort to short-cut the whole thought-process by a "slogan solution"—by an appeal, that is, to emotionally charged ideas (intolerance, Americanism) which would simply dash the real problem aside. The non-Jews, too, were swayed in their thinking by enchanneling patterns and symbols. Something in Gentile prejudice harks back to the half-forgotten reproach against the Jews as "Christ-killers." And much seems due to an uneasiness lest privileges that have long been vested in "our set" are to be disturbed or invaded by newcomers. Such feelings do not lend themselves to any self-satisfying expression. We tend to shirk the self-scrutiny they require and to make the most of arguments that lie more at hand. We cite much repeated observations that Jews are grasping, are clannish, are "grinds," are ill-mannered —observations that may have enough surface-truth to excuse us from the effort to go deeper. Even education does not protect people from this evasion of the real values at stake. The higher acquirements of the mind merely supply better "rationalizings" of their hidden motives. Discussion at this stage, therefore, needs the help of expert thought on human nature. But even without such help the conferees can do much to draw from one another discriminating revisions of their essential desires. In the Harvard discussions, for example, the earlier claims came to be re-expressed in ways more accurately considered and more inviting to mutual respect. Thus—

a. "Harvard should preserve not a unison of the Anglo-Saxon note but a balance of racial notes on an Anglo-Saxon foundation, like that of the stringed instruments in an orchestra."

b. "The college should not overtax its resources for providing social contact between students from different walks of life."

c. "The college should seek as material to work on individuals of the most promise in brains and personality, regardless of race."

d. "The college should recognize the Jewish-American boy to be just as deserving of its opportunities as any other American boy."

e. "Harvard should not adopt a policy that would afford a precedent for intolerance elsewhere."

As a result of this give and take the various proposals were scrutinized with a more sensitive awareness both of the principles involved and of possibilities for making constructive changes in the situation. Discussion came to turn critically on the following questions:

Was the present race-feeling a reaction to uncongenial individuals or to a group-difference sharpened by numbers?

Would not the closing of freshman enrollments at a certain point impose a mere numerical limit where a qualitative sifting was sought?

—"Would the quality of freshman material be raised," it was asked, "by excluding a Cohen with an average grade of 90, while admitting a Murphy at 68, or a Morgan at 62?"

By what tests could an admission committee pick out the "best" Jews?

—If scholarship was to be the testing basis, would not the resulting high percentage of scholarly students in the Jewish group accentuate their success in the competitions for college honors?

—If "personality" and breeding were allowed to count, would this not result in picking the sons of *prosperous* Jews, and the accentuating of mere snobbery?

Could not a racial balance be preserved by improving facilities for admission to Harvard in certain non-Jewish areas of population?

The last question brought under view the fact that for some years alumni in the West had complained that good students in their rural and small town high schools were out of contact with the Harvard admission system. The local state universities admitted by certificate, and local students could go to Harvard only at the cost of special work for the Harvard examinations and special travel and expense to take them.

In this way the "Jewish problem" in the college came to be treated as part of the larger problem of finding sound principles and methods by which to sift the candidates for admis-

sion. By seeking steps that would satisfy all parties as gathering up the essential desires of each, the discussions among the college authorities ended with really constructive agreements; namely—

i. They rejected any measure of imposed proportional representation, as a departure from the ideal of "equal opportunity for all regardless of race or religion."

ii. They declared any measure of personal selection by conference or intelligence tests to be inexpedient, in that such a method would inevitably be construed as a covert device for race restrictions.

iii. They recommended that, as an experiment, pupils who should complete an approved school course with a rank that put them in the highest seventh of their graduating class should be admitted to the college without examination.

The effect of this measure was the building of a new group of students from rural schools and from regions West and South outside the regular Harvard recruiting grounds. Incidentally these regions have but few Jews, so that this accession has raised the proportion of non-Jewish men in the college. As a group agreement for college action it had the following merits: (1) It gave a hopeful turn to the situation by treating prejudice as something tractable to change; (2) it was a positive, innovating step, not a mere compromise; (3) it enlisted a unanimous acceptance.

Such was the outcome of the discussions in the special committee, where the concern was an impending step of collective action. In the student group, where the concern was a mutual revising of attitudes for personal action as occasion might arise, there were profitable outcomes too. The discussions left a measure of common conviction around the following views:

i. The only valid ground of uneasiness as to the Jews in the college was the *proportionate* numbers in certain distinctive associations and activities.

ii. The cultural ideal for a college community is not "assimila-

tion" by one group of all others, but mutual enlargement and enrichment.

iii. One should approach one's fellow-students as individuals, not as group representatives, and give to each the chance to show his individual worth.

Situations, Not Subjects, to Be Studied

If discussion is to be made thus rewarding, the group must give some thought to discussion method. The method of common conversation is not enough. It makes too little headway in *developing* the group's thought. Each member merely recites his opinion or his feeling, without having to ask himself "how he got that way?" He does not get to the point of seeing any situation as one in which his own and others' desires are *conditioned by the circumstances,* so that he can study with the others how to change the circumstances in ways to realize what each essentially wants.

Neither is the method of a forum the most self-developing for a discussion group. In a forum the responsibility for making headway in thinking is taken by one person—a specially informed speaker. "Discussion" by the others consists of questions or objections to which the speaker makes reply. This method does indeed give their thought on the matter an orderly advance. But the progress is apt to be more apparent than real. It represents the speaker's success in tidying up his hearers' minds—a process which somehow touches no inner impulses and habits. The latter depend on *adjustments* of thought and feeling which people must make for themselves. In fact, a speaker and a discussion group have different sorts of concern with a matter under study. To the former it is a *subject* to be elucidated; to the latter it is a *situation* to be grasped. For example, anyone qualified to speak about married women taking business jobs would choose and emphasize facts from history and economics in a way to round out a consistent presentation. He would feel that the subject has its own beginning and development which call for its appropriate logical

unfolding. A member of the group, on the other hand, would face the matter more concretely. He might know a married woman with business experience who was considering a chance to piece out her husband's earning by going back to work. He would feel that the situation called for an emphasis on facts which pointed to specific consequences for such a woman, for her children, for other women needing jobs, and for social standards in the neighborhood. These consequences are what makes the matter real. To him the main thing is to get the principles for guiding decisions tested by other people's reactions in such cases. Their discussion together may not yield as finished an analysis of the matter, but it will be *their own* analysis—one that offers leads for their own courses of conduct.

Organized discussion, therefore, is neither a conversation nor a question-firing around a speech, but an exercise in concerted thinking. It is a face-to-face experience of an all-participant group. This keeps the speaking less self-conscious and more responsible. Before an audience a speaker is swayed by an awareness that his hearers will applaud a telling expression of their own views. Before fellow conferees he is speaking to people who expect their views to modify his. The group, in fact, with its spokesmen for differing points of view, becomes a little test-tube of social dynamic; its thinking all centers on the possibilities of making difference mutually enhancing instead of mutually thwarting.

In making a "situation" approach rather than a "subject" approach to the matter discussed it follows the way in which people think in every-day life. When a man thinks through a problem of living, his thought-experience runs something like this:—

An *occasion* for conscious, effortful thinking arises when his desires and purposes seem balked by circumstances. These include settled arangements of all sorts not easily changed, usually also desires and views of other people at variance with his own. For example, he finds the circumstances and demands of his

daily job to be such as block his way to real satisfaction in living. He cannot help matters simply by sledding on in his routine activities and relations. It is precisely these that have brought him into the difficulty. He must stop and "size the situation up."

The actual process of his thought takes the form of asking and answering four questions:

(1) What situation have we here?

(2) What possibilities of attitude and action does it show?

(3) What help on it can we get from added facts and reconsidered feelings?

(4) What decision can we reach as to satisfying action?

The first question represents an effort to look at the situation more carefully, to sharpen it up as a picture of personalities and circumstances, so that one can take it in as a whole and see precisely where the difficulty lies. Thus the man will see details in the daily experience of his job which make him realize that his work is mechanical and monotonous, or that he has no chance to see its larger bearings, or that his boss orders him around in arbitrary, self-important ways, or that the business offers him little opportunity for advancement, or that it does no worthy service to society. Such details become recognized as *factors* in one or another *kind* of human problem that people have thought about before. The man begins to see his situation as a network of causes and consequences which calls for a little human engineering.

The second question draws out various suggestions toward action that may bring about a satisfying reconstruction of the situation. Naturally the circumstances allow a man to do very little experimenting with his job, since any changes in his working relations affect the purposes and interests of other people. He must do some experimenting in his imagination—helped, of course, by talk with other people—with his attention directed at the *consequences* of each course of action thus

mentally rehearsed. In this way he comes to see just where the problem lies; where he and others agree and where they differ on matters of fact and on matters of desire.

The third question seeks help on the problem. It draws into the man's thinking new information—partly facts from books and experts, partly a better understanding of the attitudes and prejudices of the persons involved. By thus learning *how the situation came to be what it is,* he sees in it clues to some possible change for the better.

The fourth question starts the weighing of values and consequences that bring him to a decision. Usually the decision is on some specific thing to do—the reasons for which give due weight to all the values at stake. His thought about the likely consequences of each possible course does three things: (*a*) it *tests* each line of action by noting how each affects *all* the interests in the situation; (*b*) it tests the interests themselves, by bringing out sharper discriminations as to what he and others really want; and (*c*) it *develops* his understanding of facts and principles in a way that not only guides him to action in the immediate difficulty but leaves him keen and resourceful for future situations.

Such is the natural pattern of a thought process. The occasion that sets the process going may be some experience of difficulty. It may also be a disagreement in conversation—say, about a novel that has been censored; or the reading of a news paragraph—say, about proposals for disarmament; or the sight of a park-corner mass meeting on the Sacco-Vanzetti case. The thinker's approach in such instances is still that of meeting "situations," but situations to which, being simply a member of the interested public, he makes his adjustments at second hand.

These four phases of the thinking process appear in the course of a profitable discussion. The group naturally begin with the matter in question by telling one another in what ways it has been for each a matter of experience. This assures its *reality* for them as something springing up in actual life. Also, it gives each member of the group significant items from

other people's lives that supplement his own. Each grows aware of the different points of view from which different types of person respond to such a situation. Together the members, reporting their several experiences, produce a composite picture of what is most *typical* in the circumstances where the difficulty arises; and they recognize the details thus reported as factors in one or another type of problem that they must reckon with.

The reactions in the group to this problem, their proposals for meeting the situation, will show what for them are the essential views and values that need discussion. Since different members of the group have at heart different interests that are at stake, they should test each proposal by telling one another what they feel would be the consequences of each for them. It is the things that here seem vital that determine just where and how to deal with their differences: just what disagreements as to fact, and what incompatibilities in desire. Disagreements as to fact will call for new data: namely (*a*) facts drawn from experience in the past, and (*b*) testimony from special experts. Such data are linked up with tendencies and principles which have been identified with definite social causes and consequences, and suggest the directions in which to look for ways out of the difficulty. Differences as to desire will invite attention to the *reasons* for their respective feelings, and will result in showing how their conflicting desires depend on conditions which they can agree to change. The "solution" of their problem, therefore, is one that recognizes any situation as bound to *develop* as it moves on. By treating their various desires not as fixed sentiments but as what they would *desire to do* they come out of the discussion with an agreed common trend in the direction of which they will severally experiment.

As a method of learning, this "situation approach" of the discussion group has certain advantages over the "subject approach" of learning from books and lectures. Without neglecting the thought of experts, it encourages every-day folk to respect their own experience. It enriches their experience by

what they get from one another both in testimony and in new stimulations of interest. And it helps the learners to keep their feet on the ground, where otherwise their talk about "principles" would run to cloudy abstractions.

Conference, Not Debate, the Method

Most people, when discussion is proposed, think of it as debate. They naturally expect debating, since that is the form of argument we are all familiar with. We hear it in public meetings and are taught it in the schools. Yet discussion follows the method of *conference,* which is something quite different from debate. Let us note the points of difference:

(1) A debate takes up a situation that has developed into a controversy around one proposed solution. This somewhat limits the thinking of debaters to considerations which make for an answer, yes or no, to the proposal. Speakers against the proposal may of course have an alternative plan, but that too is something already thought out, so that the general course of argument runs in prepared grooves to one of the alternatives, sometimes to a compromise between the two.

(2) A debate lines the speakers up on two sides. Naturally the dispute is thus set for a deciding vote by which one side will win and the other lose. Both sides, therefore, look at the issue not as a problem but as a battle. Their tone and style of argument become contentious. Opponents like to score on one another. They do not expect the decision to end with the losers in any coöperative state of mind for carrying it out. Losers are expected simply to be good sports and wait their chance to win another day.

(3) A debate tends to make much of logic.[1] The speakers try to display a cogent case from the evidence, and point out fallacies in one another's reasoning. The plan decided on is

[1]This of course has its value as an educational exercise. It lays the premises of a piece of reasoning open to inspection. But the thing tends to grow over-formal. The average school debate is a sort of syllogistic cake-walk.

thus a sort of mental blue-print with its thought-scheme all logically tested, so that it may be carried out as it stands.

In contrast with these features of debate are the key features of conference:

(1) A conference begins, not with a proposal calling for a show-down of choice, but with a fresh look at the whole situation from different points of view. It assumes that what different parties are claiming and proposing under the present conditions of difficulty they would qualify under conditions which offer to each party some prospect of coöperation from the others in carrying its purposes out. It tries to get at their various desires farther up stream, so to speak, where they can more easily be turned into any of various courses of action.

Thus in the college discussions reported on pages 6-14, the conferees were not merely dealing out contentions for and against a proposal—say, that Harvard should restrict its admission of Jews. They were dealing analytically with people's wishes and the underlying circumstances. They got people to discriminate what was essential in their claims for "keeping Harvard Anglo Saxon," for treating Jews as "unassimilable," for choosing the "best freshman material," and for setting "democracy" against "intolerance"; and they found a way to satisfy the essential wishes by thinking out the conditions under which they might be harmoniously realized.

(2) Instead of two sides a conference has as many sides as there are desires at stake. It hopes to achieve not a winning vote but a *solution,* a way of joint action that will enlist everybody concerned. This tends to avert wasteful combativeness. The speakers are there not to master opponents but to master a situation. They therefore avoid pointing blame and ridicule at people they disagree with, knowing that the conference will get further as a piece of human engineering if their language does not leave people sore. The main thing before them is to treat the situation not as fixed but as a flow of happenings within which conflicting purposes can find satisfying adjustments.

This idea that people can bring about a mutual qualifying and fulfilling of purposes through progressive steps of coöperative experience is at the heart of discussion method. It is the idea of solution by "integrating" the diverse purposes where otherwise there would be a coercive majority "win" or a mere compromise.

It appeared, for example, in the solution which was reached by the Harvard authorities in dealing with the "Jewish question." They had before them three possible kinds of action: (a) They could pass a majority vote to restrict the admissions of Jews to twenty per cent of each incoming class. That would give effect to the claims of the greater number; but it would merely override the claims and feelings of the minority. Or, (b) they might agree on a compromise percentage. That would give each faction *part* of its desires, each yielding part for the sake of harmony. It would mean *some* restriction, though less than had been urged by the "Nordics." Such an agreement would affect the *amount* of desire satisfied but not the *kind* of desires that the conferees would be left with. Or, (c) they could rethink their desires and claims and find some way to give effect to what each essentially wanted. This was what happened. The decision to admit honor-grade students without examinations brought in more students from non-Jewish areas and assured a "Nordic" preponderance in the college. And it did so without involving the slightest discrimination against any future candidate on the score of race. Furthermore, it left all parties to the situation mutually stimulated and sensitized as to the things most worth while in their college contacts.

(3) Where a debate makes much of logic, conference makes more of psychology. It deals not so much with arguments as with reasons. The distinction is important. A man's arguments are the reasons that recite well. They do his heart credit, and his logical head. His reasons—more truly so-called—are things that lie deeper. They are the meaning to him of his own experience, and invite first of all a real understanding.

The "man convinced against his will" is one whose arguments have been refuted but whose reasons have not been touched. Where discussion dwells on reasons, in a spirit of mutual inquiry, it smokes out into the open various divisive assumptions and attitudes, and gets each conferee to realize how far his opinions represent his special sensitiveness to life-values and how far they represent prejudices in which other people have made up his mind for him.

More than debate conference keeps the disputants busied with the phrasing not so much of formal definitions as of discriminations of ideas that tend to breed confusion under fine phrases. "Competition," for example, might be formally defined as "the effort to get what others are trying to get"; but if we stop with that in an ethical discussion, somebody will think he saves the day for competition simply by declaring for "competition in service." Somebody else must point out that even "competition in service" is an effort not only to serve surpassingly well—to *be* first in service, but to be *known* as first.

Much of the art of conference turns on the group's ability to keep opponents talking without personal pique. Time is wasted where a speaker is merely delivering a retort courteous at being scored on, or is explaining that his present concession does not mean that he is really backing down. The importance of the right temper and phrasing in dispute has been well put by Herbert Kelly:[1]

"Whatever difficulties or impossibilities a man's views seem to involve, we must at least begin with the assumption that he himself sees a way round, or a way through—either he thinks he can evade the result, or he does not think the result objectionable. We are free to state any difficulty or objection we think is involved, and we may put it as an argument, but we must be careful that neither form of statement nor tone of voice shall imply that the other man cannot answer. That,

[1] *The Object & Method of Conference*, published by the World Conference on Faith and Order (Boston, Mass.).

besides being bad manners, is bad policy, since it provokes the other man to invent an answer when otherwise he might have admitted the validity of the objection; and frank admissions are a great help. No position is entirely free from difficulties. No one should be expected to have anticipated all the difficulties of his position; and a mere dialectical triumph over a conferee upon a novel objection is altogether incompatible with the Conference spirit."

Where the deliberating group is large and pressed by business —as in legislatures and conventions—it is almost driven to deal with its issue by debate. In these cases, however, the really creative thinking on the issues has first been done in small face-to-face committees. The committee, as an all-participant group, best lends itself to conference method. Each speaker there has a double responsibility: he is a spokesman for one point of view, and he is under an urgency to understand the other points of view. Those, therefore, who want to get out of discussion its special rewards as an experience of concerted thinking will take heed not to let it run into contentious debate. The latter may entertain the group with smart sparring, but it will leave them no nearer to the real inwardness of the differences that divide people.

The Part of the Discussion Leader

Those who get together for discussion meetings can double their pleasure and profit by choosing a congenial leader and then helping him make careful plans. Rewarding meetings do not "just happen." Somebody must prepare the right conditions for them. There must be thought about the number and make-up of the group, about the place for meeting, and about ways to stimulate a good discussion spirit. And there must be special thought for the conduct of each discussion as it comes.

The leader should look first to getting his discussion circle to take a really club-like attitude towards their meetings. They should decide how many and whom to include. Meetings of more than twenty are harder to keep in the team spirit of a

face-to-face group. The members should represent real varieties of experience, and should make up their group with the idea of finding one another's differences stimulating and instructive. When a theme for discussion involves a point of view not represented in the circle, some spokesman for that point of view may be invited in.

Too much thought can hardly be given to the place of meeting. Do not forget that the meetings will come round as voluntary extra engagements for people with distracting claims on their time. They should come not as calls of duty but as "club-nights." Make their setting, therefore, the most attractive room that can be found. It should be a hall of echoes for notes of good feeling in what is said. Groups too often try to create the atmosphere of a fellowship in the chalky bleakness of a classroom. Rather the room should greet the members with objects that bespeak a gracious ease and regard for beauty. The chairs should be comfortable, and arranged horseshoe-wise, to bring everybody into the picture. If there is firelight in front, so much the better.

Where such a room forms part of the setting of a church, it may afford stimulations to a religious temper in the discussion. For many groups this temper of thought will be a very real concern. It will make all the difference between the discriminations and insights that can be won by cold fact-analysis or brisk common sense and those that appear when conferees are touched by the deeper desires that brood within these seemingly work-a-day questions. The solutions which they find satisfying will be those which, taking people who have come together with specific opposed viewpoints, end by establishing views and attitudes that reflect their common stake in a better way of life. The differences between men which set them in conflict are thus felt in a way that makes the conflict itself a creative striving of spirit, with its circle of spokesmen made participants in an act not far from worship. The leader should plan to include at each meeting some features that stimulate such a mood. Just as he will want the discussion to draw on informing facts and experts, so he will

want it to draw on whatever may express or symbolize the spiritual horizons of the matter under view. Well chosen passages of verse or elevated prose, life-incidents from men of rich experience and vivid personality, even "exhibits"—books, pictures and other objects of art—may acclimatize work-a-day minds to an atmosphere of high thinking. Here will be found opportunities for the leader to give play to a fine inventiveness and resourcefulness. And in every group there are one or two members who will enjoy sharing in this imaginative resetting of the discussion stage.

The important thing here is to realize that what the members learn from their talk together is fringed about with "attendant learnings." [1] Between each person and the whole meeting there runs a by-play of reactions—likes, dislikes, satisfactions, associations, which frame up his mind-set towards ideas. These

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[1] In the older view education consisted of what one learned. In the modern view what one learns is seen to depend on what one wishes to do, and this in turn depends on what one has learned to wish. The educative result of any experience appears not simply in what the learner now knows, but in what he now *is*—in his resulting purposes, appreciations, and standards. The newer educational psychology, therefore, pays heed to the way preferences (attitudes, habits, interests) come about as by-products having great personal and social importance. In any educative experience it notes three "learnings" going on all at once, viz:

(1) Primary learnings, the specific matters of information or skill that are being directly sought;

(2) Associate suggestions, ideas called up by the matters under study, but not immediately pertinent to what is sought;

(3) Attendant learnings, the general attitudes, dispositions, and standards that give direction to one's satisfactions and dissatisfactions.

The attendant learnings show themselves as attitudes towards people, feelings about one's self, attitudes towards work or towards the matter under study and discussion, disposition toward government, standards of accuracy, integrity etc. These are built up by the incidental impressions in our educative experiences. They mean that *how* we learn makes a difference in *what we are disposed* to learn. See W. H. Kilpatrick, *Foundations of Method,* Macmillan.

are the "imponderables" in any educational venture. Their unbidden promptings, as leaders grow more expert, will increasingly be made to strengthen in the conferees redemptive attitudes towards experience. At the outset an average group member has responsible moral attitudes only in certain areas of his experience. Within the relationships of his family, his neighborhood, his place of work, his mind recognizes the guidance of his ideals. Within other areas of relationship—that of business competition, for example, or labor relations, or race contacts—he too often loses the integrity of his thinking. He either treats the area as something apart from his principles and acts without consistency between the two, or he scales down his standard to some "practical" compromise. What discussion can do is to dispose him to face these less hopeful parts of his experience in ways that—

(1) Help him form his conviction with some awareness of the forces that are at work in his own mind;

(2) Show him possibilities of giving practical effect to group-tested convictions.

When he comes to his part as chairman, the leader should expect to act as a pilot to the discussion. Not that he will steer it to his own liking. His part is rather to keep the group aware of rocks, shallows, and aimless circling. His attitude is before all that of open-minded interest in getting the different points of view accurately understood, and in seeing that the discussion does not get weighted one way or another by mere differences of fluency and assurance among the speakers. If older than his group, he will take care not to be "teachy"—phrasing questions or injecting facts in ways that invite guesses at his own conclusions. In general the leader's success is likely to depend on three things: on his preparation for the meeting, on his watchfulness of the speaking, and on a little caution against weighting the discussion himself.

The leader should prepare to bring to the meeting both some fact material (or some specially informed person) and a ques-

tion outline of the matter for discussion. The first will assure that differences of view as to fact will not spring from mere ignorance of the available data. The second will forecast the likely course of thought far enough to show where issues turn on different views of the facts, and where they turn on conflicting desires; also to show where the group may waste time on mere misunderstandings of words. The following is an example of the sort of sketch-outline that the leader may prepare. The questions naturally follow the phases of the thinking process. In the discussion, of course, the leader will freely adapt them to what develops in the group.

What Associating Across Race Lines Do We Wish in Our Neighborhood?

1. What forms of neighborhood contact involve personal relations across race lines?
2. How are people reacting to them?
   —In what ways do their reactions make for bad feeling or loss of social understanding in the neighborhood?
3. What differences in experience appear between those who take one attitude towards persons of different race and those who take a wholly different attitude?
   —From the experiences mentioned, list what seem to be the *sources* of people's attitudes towards race difference; for example, parents' talk, popular hearsay, newspaper anecdotes and cartoons, moving pictures, Sunday school and mission studies, personal contacts with foreigners.
4. What fears, embarrassments, and actual dislikes seem to be at the bottom of people's disinclination to associate across race lines?—Loss of social standing?—Intermarriage?
5. Can we classify our neighborhood contacts with people of different racial groups according to the seriousness of the social consequences of acting in them one way or another?
   —Which of them seem to raise questions simply of personal manners, tastes, congeniality and good-feeling?
   —Which of them raise questions as to possible social rearrangements as between one group and another?

—Which of them raise fundamental questions as to race fusion and the preserving of our cultural heritage?

6. What can we agree on as minimum steps towards race adjustments in the neighborhood that would not commit us to changes farther than we mean to go?

When the meeting begins, the leader's watchfulness of the speaking will come into play at once. What the group wants, of course, is to get at the really critical issues. These must be sought in a *type* of situation which will appear from various reported experiences. Naturally the members may be slow in talking up at first. The leader then must "prime and pump" by having read or recited some instance that he has noted for the purpose. One trouble here is that few speakers know how to report an experience in a way to bring out the situation that it involved. They just throw out shreds and patches of situations. If the leader keeps asking a speaker for the missing details, he turns the discussion into a dialogue or cross-examination. The better way is to incite others in the group to do the asking. They will soon educate each other into recognizing when they really see the situation and when they do not.

Once the talking is under way the leader will watch to get everybody taking part. This means getting each to take responsibility for a definite point of view towards the matter. It is a good plan to have quotations of source material in the hands of shy members, who at appropriate points may be asked to read them aloud. Having found his voice, a member will usually find something to say about what he has read. In interjecting remarks to draw people out, the chairman should offer what he says as something implied or called for by what the others have been saying, not as something *he* wants to have discussed. Half-jokingly he may even interpret a member's silence, or the expression on his face in a way to make everybody look to that member for remarks.

It is permissible, as Harrison Elliott has noted, for the leader to introduce a point of view not represented in the group. In

so doing, however, he should make it clear (perhaps by stepping to one side) that for the moment he has dropped his rôle as chairman in order to become one of the group.

When enough instances have been reported to get before the group a picture of the situation, the next step is to analyze it, so as to bring out the issues. The leader, having the advantage of his preliminary thinking, is apt to hurry this step, suggesting cues which result in the group's accepting his analysis. It is better, of course, to set the group to analyzing for itself. A good way is to jot down on a blackboard the claims which show the different points of view. As the members cite them, the leader may list them according to the *persons* affected. Thus if they are discussing the problem of "married women in business jobs," he may get the claims listed as follows:

The woman

1. Entitled to use her business skill. *a* (*c*)
2. More ladylike to be supported. *b*
3. More sensible to share in breadwinning. *b*

The children

4. Need the mother's influence. *a* (*b*)
5. Need the mother's earnings. *a*

The employer

6. Entitled to best worker available. *a* (*c*)

Other workers

7. Need the job she fills. *c*

Taking the first claim listed, the leader will mark it *a*, and ask whether any other claim turns on a recognition of her *business skill*. The group may feel that 5 and 6 make for it, and 4 against it. These claims will then all be marked *a*, as combining to give one of the issues. Let the members express the issue, but do not stop too long over niceties of wording. Write it down as issue *a*, raised by the first claim. Then take

the next claim, mark it *b,* and ask what other claim turns on the *social standard* involved. The group may decide that 3 and 4 do. Mark these *b* also and write down the issue *b* which they combine to give. So again with the remaining claims which relate to *other workers' need of jobs.* In this way the group finds that the whole problem turns on three main issues, namely—

a. Can a woman continue to practice her business skill without neglecting her children?

b. Does our social standard of married life make the woman's place in the home?

c. Are workers crowded out of jobs when married women work?

The value of this process is that it helps the group to realize that the opposed factors in a social problem are not persons but interests, desires, ideals. The same person may have conflicting interests at stake—as appears above in the case of the mother and the children. These interests, of course, are what give a general, social, importance to any particular instances that are discussed. They are social values appearing in concrete cases, and as such are everybody's concern. The *issues* in discussion, therefore, represent questions as to *what will happen to these interests* if one or another course of action is taken.

Having found the essential issues, the group of course must decide in what order to discuss them. It may be wise to *take an issue where agreement comes easily before passing to issues where agreement costs pains.* This means that early in the discussion the group will get a heartening sense of achievement. For example, the group will probably reach a common mind most easily on issue *a* stated above. It seems to be mainly a question of fact in which the age of the children, the help of relatives in the home, etc., will determine the answer. Issue *b* involves differences of ideals; issue *c* involves special data on the "lump of work" theory—the view that there is just so much work to go round. Presumably, therefore, the group will want to take them in the order *a, c, b.*

When an issue has once been taken up, the leader will keep the speaking to the point. In every group there is apt to be a person with a pet idea who will find some cue to start going on it. The leader need not formally "rule his remarks out," but may interrupt either to *ask* how they bear on the issue now before the group, or to suggest that they be postponed. Some persons are easily set off by chance words or allusions, or by some reminder of their own past, to make responses that are only partially in point. Sometimes the issue gets confused by the fact that people are using the same words in a different sense. For example, a speaker who urges a boy's right to have work *"that he likes,"* meaning "in which he can *develop* a liking" may have the remarks disputed as meaning work "that hits his fancy." In such case the leader should not offer a little speech of definition. He should put a question that will set the disputants to making their own distinction between "doing what one likes" and "liking what one does."

The leader can do much towards getting the members to deal objectively with the states of mind which they bring to the issue under discussion. When somebody uses "crowd words"—that is, words like "boss," "radical," "exploit," that are emotionally charged with old prejudices—he should get them translated into neutral terms, rephrasing them himself, if necessary. Particularly is it important to refer to people's *desires* (the "interests" at stake in an issue) in words that do not imply something blameworthy. For example, if a married woman's desire to use her trained powers as a business woman is referred to as "her business ambition," it is given a slant as something unbecoming in a mother. This, of course, begs the question. In asking for people's reasons it is well to put the questions in the third person. For example, ask: "Why do some married women feel it a point of social standing to be supported at home, even when they have few home duties to occupy them?" This makes it easy for a speaker to express the reason freely without professing it as *her own* feeling. The advantage is that others can explain why they find something snobbish in that reason without seeming to impute snobbery

to the speaker. The leader must thus watch that the discrediting of ill-grounded reasons does not come to the discrediting of a person. It is not the part of a social confessional to make a fellow-conferee "eat crow."

An important duty of the leader is that of summarizing. To summarize is to express briefly at any given point in the discussion what step has been reached by the speaking thus far. The leader may summarize for any one of three purposes: (1) to check repetition, (2) to bring dispute back to essentials, and (3) to register steps of agreement.

As he listens and takes mental notes of what is being said, the leader will find that after several speakers have brought out the really different points of view other speakers will keep on with remarks that merely put the same ideas in different words. Unless he interposes with a summary the group may waste its time with such repetitions. Again, he may note that the talk on an issue is getting off into non-essentials. Perhaps the issue as first stated now needs qualifying, but he should ask the group to check up on what it is doing. He can state the *relation* of the point which is getting discussed to the issue which is supposed to be before the group, and ask, "Does the question as it now stands come to this . . . ?" Sometimes the group is nearer agreement than it realizes, and the leader can see that the dissent is turning on details. Where he can detect grounds for agreement in what has been said, he should summarize in a way to get the agreement registered. It is better not to take a vote. The leader can recognize any minority feeling by expressing it as a qualification or reservation that guards the general trend reached by the group.

Summarizing requires special care at the end of the discussion, where the group needs to recognize the exact progress that has been made. The remark that a discussion has "got nowhere" sometimes means that the critic does not know progress in thought when he sees it—having been taught to recognize progress only when it appears in one or two obvious types of agreement. The leader, however, will know that "integrative" adjustments of purpose may begin at various points without

appearing in formal group assent. In fact, he should not let his summary belittle any remaining disagreements. Instead, he should note where the disagreement has become tempered (*a*) with a recognition that the situation is not so simple as the group had begun by supposing; or (*b*) with a disposition to test opinions by their consequences and not merely trust them because of their sources; or (*c*) with a readiness to make tentative practical adjustments that may shift the present points of view. All these mean progress, and assure the group that the discussion has been rewarding, even where no curtain falls on an acclaimed "solution."

A leader is often helped in summarizing by having a secretary take sketchy notes of the points that are made, and read them off as a check-up on the summary.

The Use of Facts and "Authorities"

Discussion, as a way of self-education, does not dispense with books and experts. At one point or another in its course a question before the group calls for information that must be got from reading or from the testimony of people who have made special studies or had special experiences. Otherwise the group's thinking will merely run round in a squirrel-cage of personal impressions. A good discussion leader will foresee such points when he makes his own question-outline before the meeting, and will make provision that the group shall not waste time on ignorant guesses where sources of fact are accessible.

A good plan for the group is to have a shelf at some handy spot where the leader and the secretary can set out a few books before each meeting. They should insert cards at the passages to be used, with the exact page-references; then by post-card or telepone they should get members of the group to be responsible for reporting on them. Not more than a few pages should be asked of any one member, but he should be asked to read them accurately and be prepared to state their gist in answer to questions.

These quotations from books, of course, should be treated as spring-boards from which to launch further discussion. It is the special value of reading done in this way that it gives each reader a *use* for the information. He reads as one seeking data for thinking, not mere lore to lie on the shelves of his mind. And the group, when he reports to them, stir one another to responses and questions; so that their experience together is not merely that of receiving new facts, but that of actively relating the facts to the situation. What they learn is strengthened and enriched by the "attendant learnings" of responsible and discriminating attitudes towards facts.

The new facts may, of course, be sought not from books, but from persons invited in to take part as "authorities" on the matters before the group. Here too the group, with all respect for an "authority's" information, will not merely sit at his feet. Their leader should make it easy for them to make the expert's presence an occasion not for a set speech, but for factual answers to questions as they come up in discussion. Such a use can most helpfully be made of those who are "authorities" not in the sense of experts, but in the sense of persons with special experience close to the matters in question. An employer, a trade union official, a social worker, the minister of a colored church, are sources of information which the group is all the more likely to turn to account because it is near at hand.

Among the authorities to be used, where discussion includes a religious point of view, are the records of sacred scripture. Here especially it becomes important what attitudes the group takes towards them. It is not an irreverent attitude to assume that Jesus said things because they are true, not that they are true because he said them. And in dealing with his sayings we should not be too simple as to their transfer value for the life of today. The words of a prophet are his responses to the situtions in which he found himself. These are not the situations in which we find ourselves. It seems a question, then, whether we should take maxims out of the life of the past and lay them down literally as rules for the experiences of today. Given a

present situation, its likeness to the one which evoked the maxim is only a vague type-likeness; and the maxim applies to it not as a logical rule but as a spiritual point of view.[1]

It is evident that discussion seeks to use "authorities" without succumbing to their prestige. This spirit needs strengthening, for the prevalent educational faith of today is a faith in setting people right by telling them things. In college, church, and business the spotlight still falls on lecture, sermon, and sales-talk. Discussion, however, represents a faith in the possibility of setting up thought-conditions by which people will find the right ways for themselves. If developed as a real coöperative discipline, it can make conference increasingly recognized as the school of self-determining personalities. There is already some progress towards putting the expert in his place. Instead of setting him to shape our situation by his findings we realize that as the people *in* the situation we must move *with* it—using the facts of the expert as they combine with the facts of day-to-day experience. In social and religious education progress will be slower towards putting the prophet in his place. People still expect ideals and "principles" to make things happen by the sheer ardor with which somebody affirms them. It will be the work of discussion to show that we master a situation by starting not with general pronouncements but with specific observations; that while principles help by setting our faces in promising directions, we actually reinterpret our principles in terms of the new experience. And after the prophet and his "message" have geared into our democratic process, there will remain the priest and his "spiritual dynamic." For he represents a view of social process that makes spiritual energy and passion a thing apart from the intellectual grasp of means. It will be the highest success of discussion to show that energy is created from within by a fellowship in spiritual striving, and

[1]Of course the sayings of scripture impress their full value when we take the record on its own terms as an unfolding spiritual theme. To read it as such is to enter into an experience enriching and sensitizing in its own distinctive way. This is reward enough, even if the reader does not emerge from it with a sheaf of hints for solving his problems.

that here too the power bred *with* and *between* people is a dynamic surpassing the power *over* people which some would switch on from above.

The Group as a Clinic for "Mind-sets"

It is in exchanges of thought about *social values* which people have at heart that discussion is most revealing. It shows how various attitudes and preconceptions gather into their emotional drive influences too deep in the subsoil of the mind for disputants to be aware of them. Where they inhibit or unconsciously weight people's responses to ideas the discussion can be focussed, for a while, on these prejudices in ways that bring about a mutual self-scrutiny and release.

The group should expect thus to become a friendly clinic for mind-sets. At any time its members may find that their logical resolve to "face the situation" and analyze the problem is psychologically impracticable; that in fact they simply won't look at the situation for what it really is. To begin with, they are likely to dwell on disturbing symptoms instead of looking for underlying causes. In any case of messed-up relations there is likely to be somebody so rawly selfish, or dishonest, or unreasonable that people think they have made a diagnosis when they have pounced with gusto on the most exposed offender. Again, the "insiders" in any situation are emotionally disposed to view it in tinted lights becoming to their personal rôles. And, lastly, people bring to their disputes certain mental stereotypes; so that each looks at the other with an assumption of what he is going to be like, having imaged him under some type-idea—say, as autocratic boss, or stand-pat officeholder, or "agitator," or "sorehead"—and therefore doesn't observe what he happens actually to be.

Professor Overstreet has drawn attention[1] to three attitudes of mind that are common handicaps to fruitful social thinking. The first he calls "social animism." It is the tendency to personify the forces—economic, cultural, psychological—which

[1]In a paper on "The Psychology of Mass Education" at the Brookwood Teachers' Conference for 1925.

have given rise to a situation, and to treat it as melodrama, with the capitalist, the bolshevist, or the pacifist, gathering all the mischief-making into his one personal rôle. This makes the solution of the situation merely a question how to defeat some designing villain. It loses sight of the network of impersonal causes which must be understood and mastered if we are to achieve social control and enlightened redirection. The second attitude is a step more realistic than the first in that it doesn't merely look for some arch-offender to blame. It recognizes impersonal forces, but it *over-simplifies* them. It sees *"the* cause" of all our difficulties in the "profit system" or in the liquor traffic, or in "unassimilated aliens." The solutions of our difficulties reduce to some one formula, the defenders of which grow fanatically intolerant of all other interests and claims. This attitude Professor Overstreet calls "simplism." The third attitude he calls an "antagonism complex." A disputant in this state of mind sees the opposing party as under suspicion in *all* their activities and wishes. For example, the class-conscious worker often feels that rather than share in "bourgeois" art, refinements and improvements—the heritage of our common civilization—he should "beware the Greeks bringing gifts" and extend his antagonism to everything that the enemy cherishes. Such attitudes make people indisposed to assume the true conferee's frame of mind: the *considering,* exploring, engineering way of viewing our own and other people's purposes as subject to changes for the better under new conditions which we can find ways to create.

The conference group, therefore, helps the real situation to *grow* on people's minds. It invites attention to possibilities of "integrating" the purposes now in conflict either (1) by finding new means by which they may be pursued without clash, or (2) by bringing about a shift in the relative appeal of the present purposes, so that they fall into a new and harmonious perspective. Such possibilities of change, when mutually grasped, dispose people to take a creative attitude towards purposes. Instead of insisting that one's own are "in the right," just as things are, one looks for things to do by which purposes that may

now be a bit narrow, fixed, and ingrown shall get caught up into a widening, ongoing, new experience. The developing of this attitude should be the special concern of the discussion leader. At every point he should keep the emphasis on visualizing new possibilities of action, not on debating present opinions. And he should good-humoredly bring a speaker back to his real purpose as a conferee when he betrays one of those swift invasions of "self" feeling that direct his talk towards face-saving, or getting even with somebody, or figuring as a "good fellow."

The Developing of a Discussion Series

With various types of group the occasions of conference and discussion come about of themselves. Discussion then becomes simply the practical way of meeting situations, and the chief concern for the group is to govern their counsel together by the procedure that will make it rewarding. As the methods and ideas here sketched become more and more a matter of common command, it is likely that more and more kinds of situation—in families, in neighborhoods, in and between organizations—will be brought into the laboratory of group conference. People will have found a way to make education a continuing process in their lives.

With certain groups the occasions for discussion-meetings arise less inevitably. They may be semi-social clubs which turn to discussion as a more profitable way to use their meetings. When such a group thus begins work, its members should feel themselves making progress at once in two respects: They should get pleasantly acquainted and at ease; and they should get a definite anticipation of what the discussions are going to do for them. The first meeting, therefore, should raise hopes of achieving more than hit-or-miss talk which ends in talk.

A promising set-up for the evenings to follow can be drawn from the group itself by starting with a "problem-finding discussion." For example, a group of business employees would begin by discussing, "How can I find satisfaction in my job?" This question raises no simple problem, to be solved at the end

of one hour. It brings up the whole picture of the business life of men and women today. The obstacles to satisfaction which appear within the experience of the group lie partly in the kinds of work that occupy one's time, partly in one's relations to other people, partly in what one feels about the whole business system. And if the members are to do anything about it, they will here begin to see in what matters one can act for oneself, in what matters one can act only with some coöperation from others, and in what matters any action must look to changes to be brought about between business groups.

The discussion, therefore, should bring the group to two or three questions, each of which will deserve a discussion period to itself. This is far enough to look ahead. The questions thus chosen will give the right send-off for the next meetings, if they set some members to observing and experimenting and other members to looking up source-data to report on. A logical lay-out for the program is less important than that the members should feel that among themselves, at least, the discussions will make things happen.

What has been said about the "situation approach" should not be taken as meaning that each and every discussion is to move through the steps, "situation—problem—help—solution." Any particular new conviction, it is true, is not really wrought into the mind of the learner except through these phases of the learning process; that is, except as the matter is (1) experienced, (2) faced as a problem, (3) dealt with in the light of new facts and discriminations, and (4) satisfactorily acted on. And any one discussion *may* follow through this cycle of the learning experience. But many matters are too large and complex to be moved through in this fashion. With them, one's learning experience may start at a later phase—say, with a speech, a prejudice-test, a passage of reading, or an experimental project. Any of these may thus be an educative incident playing its part in a larger educative whole. And the discussion that springs up around each will call for a pattern and procedure of its own.

The work of any one discussion hour, therefore, may take a course shaped by the circumstances. For example, some groups discussing race relations have begun by giving themselves a prejudice-test—an exercise that would logically be thought of as belonging in the phase of "help on the problem." Their reason has been that the test (1) stages the meeting as an acquaintance party by making people talk about themselves; (2) saves time by disclosing at once a variety of attitudes that would otherwise come to light only in the course of several meetings. The important thing is that in each session the group shall see exactly where it is—that is, shall see what it is doing as an episode within the whole process to be rounded out. Group and leader will perhaps be helped to keep their bearings at any time by fixing the following little map of a "complete educative process":—

Phases of the Learning Process

i. An experience of a problematic situation

This makes it a matter of "learning for living." The situation is felt as difficult, partly because of what needs to be known (new things to be dealt with), partly because of what needs to be desired (apathies and conflicts of interest in people's minds).

ii. The difficulties recognized as a problem

The factors in the situation, the special circumstances and the social values at stake—including factors of prejudice and mind-set in the participants—become identified as calling for various kinds of information and effort.

iii. Help on the problem

Facts from books and special students are brought to bear on the matter. Also analysis of the various attitudes towards it and discriminations that stimulate new sensitivities and interests. Where opinions in the group had tended to hark back to their *sources* in hearsay and chance experience, they now tend to look forward to their likely *consequences* if acted on.

iv. Experimental action

> Any activities upon reaching decisions make the learning become a part of the learner. The satisfactions that attend his new dealings with the matter reinforce the adjustments that have taken place in his mind—disposing him to share in steps that "integrate" purposes and renovate his own attitudes and assumptions.

Most logically, of course, the talk in a discussion group will take this very sequence. Psychologically, however, the states of mind may be such that speakers will touch each other off through a line of response that varies from the line of reasoning. Even where the logical order prevails, there will be movement back to earlier phases at any pass that calls for fresh looks at experience. The help from special information may be sought at once, as data on the situation itself, revealing its wider significance, and not deferred to the stage where it comes as help towards a decision. In fact, the pattern of a "live-and-learn" discussion may shape its purposive course with some shuttling between these four phases. The only proviso one asks is that people shall recognize where they are, and whither the talk is moving.

It is hoped that the secretaries of discussion groups will keep note of the experiments and projects by which their meetings become practical and vital. The art of discussion depends for its growth on the shared experience of those who are learning from their own mistakes and successes.

APPENDIX A[1]

Hints on Planning and Leading

I. THE LEADER'S PREPARATION FOR THE DISCUSSION

Deciding on the Scope of the Discussion

Determining the Precise Theme

In choosing the matter for discussion the leader will try to select that aspect which touches the experience and responsibilities felt by the members. If it is the tariff question, he asks himself, "What aspects of this are of special interest to them?" The discussion may be planned to move into other phases, but it is usually best to capitalize the special concern of the members as a starting point, or as the center of the problem. A group often proposes a topic in which the interest is superficial or academic. For example, the feasible tonnage limitation for battleships may afford young folks a discussion, but they must derive its substance from the current magazines and will find it increasingly technical and remote. On the other hand, the question whether in the event of another war they should refuse to do war service is one close to their personal fortunes as well as of public concern. The discussion of a topic thus chosen often can make a difference in individual or group experience and may lead on to effective action.

Another consideration in selecting the theme is that there be enough difference of opinion and experience in the group to make for a fruitful interchange of ideas. The differences may be those of opinion and attitude, as between those who approve of Japan's policy in Manchuria, and those who feel otherwise.

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[1]The substance of this appendix was prepared in first draft by Mrs. Elizabeth Watson-Pollard of the Inquiry Staff, and in writing it I have profited by the skilled collaboration of Mr. S. M. Keeny.—A. D. S.

Or, the group may be alike in their attitude toward Japanese policy, but divided in opinion as to what should be the stand of their own government. The group may be agreed on the desirability of Model Assemblies of the League but need to pool experience on how they may best be managed.

Some topics should be postponed because they would divide the group too sharply on points which cannot be settled in one discussion. These same topics may be re-worded, however, to invite attention to deeper considerations which the group can discuss more objectively. For example, a student club which had fallen into mere taunts at one another as "radicals" and "reactionaries" when they had tried to discuss what communism could do for their country, met again over the question, "How far is it possible and desirable to make buyers' needs and not sellers' profits the basis of industrial organization?" and had a profitable hour of study on the *social* validity of *speculative* profit. The discussion was here planned not to seek agreement on a contentious issue, but to deepen people's thinking on certain assumptions that underlie it. This may be important where the group includes persons who trot out stock formulas (for example Marxian maxims) as supplying the master keys to every situation. A similar recasting of a topic is needed where certain members take "absolutist" positions, holding for example that *since all exploitation of the weak by the strong is wrong,* any measure to advance trade with Latin America that has one-sided privileges is to be viewed as a social sin of our government.

Formulating a Question Outline

Having decided the precise theme of the discussion, the leader will do well to think out the presumable steps that a discussion of that theme by this group will take. Think what attitudes and opinions they are likely to have, what ideas are likely to be confused in their minds, and what points of fact they will be vague on. If the group feels no problem, put the facts so as to show why others are feeling one. If, on the other hand, they recognize a problem, say that between Jewish minorities and

Christian majorities, but are too far apart to discuss steps towards solving it, plan steps of approach to a clearer understanding as to the economic, psychological, and cultural factors in the maladjustments of Jewish minorities which are common to all minority groups. If they are ready to discuss ways and means (for example, of bettering the relations between Jews and non-Jews in university life), don't feel it necessary to take the group through all the steps of drawing out the problem and analyzing it.

It is important that the outline should present a sequence of points to be talked to that is dictated by a *learning* approach for the group and not by the *logical* beginning, middle, and end of the subject-matter. For example, the following outline treats the discussion group as if it were about to compose a lecture together:

OUTLINE A

Theme: What is the problem of disarmament?

1. What are menacing prospects of armament?
   a. The destructiveness of the new agencies of combat—chemical and aerial warfare
   b. The costliness of modern armaments
2. What peaceable agencies are available?
   a. The Permanent Court of International Justice
   b. The Council of The League
   c. Agencies of Arbitration and Conciliation set up by Treaties
3. What efforts towards disarmament have been tried?
   a. The peace treaties
      —Disarming of the Central European countries by the Versailles Treaty
      —Articles 8 and 9 of The League Covenant
   b. The political efforts
      —Geneva Protocol, Locarno Pact, Kellogg Pact
   c. The international conferences
      —Washington, Geneva, and London
   d. The Armament Truce

4. How effective is our peace machinery?
    a. The League's handling of the Manchurian situation
    b. The non-interference of the United States in the same situation

Here the questions will make the talk begin not where the topic touches the awakened interest of a citizen group but where an expository address would take it up: namely, with a comparative view of past and present wastage due to war. In the main the questions call for recitals of fact on the assumption that the group will defer questions as to their own attitudes and opinions until a proper deposit of information is all in. Only the last question really gives the members a chance to say what their own feelings are about disarmament possibilities.

In contrast with Outline A let us see what an outline might look like which is dictated by the thinking trend most likely to prove congenial to group-thinking:

Outline B

Theme: How are we to form the right sort of public opinion on disarmament?

1. In what ways are we being impelled to take positions on disarmament?
    a. The costs of armament in a period of depression
    b. Propaganda of various organizations
    c. Pronouncements from governmental sources
    d. Declarations of leaders of opinion in other countries
    e. The Disarmament Conference
2. In what ways do the current influences on public opinion make sound thinking on disarmament difficult?
    a. Prejudiced appeals
    b. Popular attitudes and assumptions as expressed in journals, radio talks, etc.
3. How can armament planning be put on the kind of scientific basis that is now being sought for economic planning?
    a. What sort of analysis of the problem will help public thinking?

(*E.g.* an analysis which views armament as one of the "sanctions" for enforcing decisions between nations—to be considered along with other factors: the *occasions* of strife, and the *agencies* of adjudication.)

b. How can we start this kind of objective approach in our own contacts with public thinking?

Here the first question engages the already awakened interest of the group in the business depression, and makes their concern with the costs of armament seem a personal one. Again, it draws attention to what people are saying in other countries, and to an immediate dramatic occasion; the Disarmament Conference. With their interest thus enlisted, the group will gladly listen to those who have come with prepared data as to the historical background of the problem.

Furthermore, the aim towards which the questions move is something compassable by the group. By pursuing the workings of people's minds on such elements of the problem as are pressed forward in Question 3, the members bring themselves to agreed ways of building sound opinion for public action, where otherwise they might end merely by "resolving" what government officials should do.

It need hardly be said that the leader, having brought such an outline to the discussion, will let it be modified by considerations that will appear in the talking. The outline should serve as a presumable, but not prescribed, chart for the course of thought.

Preparing the Members for the Meeting

The more advance thinking the members can be brought to do, the better for the discussion. The leader's planning, therefore, should include this concern, since the members are not likely to exert themselves between meetings unless they know he expects it of them. He will do well to take a few minutes in one meeting to get them to think ahead as to what information they will need for the next discussion. It is still better if the group will take responsibility—perhaps through a steering com-

mittee—for securing *informed* discussion in the most acceptable way.

The most modest preparation of this sort is simply to ask two or three active-minded members to come primed on certain points sure to need elucidating. A step in preparing the whole group can sometimes be made by gathering a first round of expression as to opinion and points of view through a simple questionnaire sent out early enough to get the answers back in writing before the group meets. These, if summarized for presentation to the meeting, save much preliminary talk and afford a basis for moving expeditely to the important step of group analysis of the issue.

All members will do *some* reading if it is put into brief and thought-provoking form. Mimeographed sheets, each presenting a case instance, or a solution proposal explained, or several definitions of words that breed confusion, make sure that people come with some clearing of their minds on the subject. Good standard forms can be worked out for such "data sheets." For example, a group that was planning to discuss the part of school-teachers in promoting understanding of the League of Nations used an identical outline for summarizing the data on certain available resources: namely, school-holiday camps, inter-school correspondence, "co-national" education, circulated teaching materials, films on the League. The outline was as follows—

1. Define the resource—giving its distinctive features.
2. Specify its purpose—perhaps distinguishing what is, from what is not, its purpose:
   —Refer to the values it is directed at.
3. State its provisos and procedures:
4. Tabulate facts pointing towards its actual working:
   —Those pointing (1) to its advantages; (2) to its limitations.

The leader should not over-press the members to do outside reading. He can encourage it, however. Where the meetings continue for a series of sessions, he can give out bibliographies

with explicit references (by chapter and page) to pertinent passages. Pamphlets and mimeographed matter are more likely to be read if the members are led to signify their desire for it—as by raising their hands, or by moving to get it.

Fully as important as preparation in subject-matter is preparation of members for their part in the discussion. Too often they are not aware of what is expected of them. It is only the occasional group which builds better than it knows. See that members have explained to them, and keep before their attention, a few simple points about method. Here are four which may be presented to members on cards for ready reference;

1. Keep to the point.
2. Speak briefly.

   (Go into details only after others have had opportunity to speak.)
3. Be a good listener to a person trying to make his point clear.
4. Express disagreement as *your* difficulty in sharing the unacceptable views.

Preparing the Place-Conditions

A little planning beforehand about arrangements will eliminate those handicaps of setting which detract from a discussion. Usually all that is required is to see that there will be a quiet corner with comfortable chairs arranged informally. So often rooms with stiff rows of chairs are accepted because the leader did not think of the need of an informal arrangement early enough to make the necessary additional effort. When there is to be more than one discussion in a large room, care should be taken to see that groups are not too close. A mistaken economy of space may destroy the effectiveness of all the other arrangements.

With a large group there is a tendency to have all chairs facing the leader. There is then a double pressure toward a forum style of speaking because of the number of persons and because

they face the leader rather than each other. Where the leader takes a central position, let him see that it is as near a semi-circle arrangement as possible, and avoid remaining at a distance on a platform or behind a special table. When the group is small and the chairs are straight-backed, it is more comfortable for members to sit about a table.

Be sure that members do not have to sit facing a direct light. If chairs cannot be moved and there are windows behind the leader, it is better to pull the shades and turn on the electricity than to force members to strain their eyes. The leader who is busied with important matters of program will do well to appoint some member to take care of all details that assure good air, good light, quiet, and protection from interruptions.

The group is often helped in keeping a number of items in mind by having the leader use a portable blackboard for listing and diagraming. Some leaders hang up a number of large sheets of paper fastened together at the top, writing on them with black crayon and tearing them off as they are filled. This paper record is useful after the meeting for purposes of appraisal and preparation for the next sessions. The provision of working materials of this sort (blackboard or bulletin sheets) should not be allowed to obtrude an uncongenial, class-room element into an otherwise inviting setting. These things can usually be put at one side at the outset and brought forward only when the work will evidently gain by their use.

II. THE LEADER'S PART IN THE DISCUSSION

Every discussion is a little exploration into the unknown. No two come out alike. Discussion leadership, then, appeals to one's love of adventure. There is danger, of course, but the casualties are not numerous. Persons who have been trained to think with reasonable clarity, and who are accustomed to work with others generally do well. In fact they learn to lead groups much more quickly than to make successful speeches. "The discussion leader does not need to be an expert in the subject-

matter he is dealing with. It is enough if he has thought through the problem sufficiently to see what the major factors are, so that he can stimulate members to think further into the subject than they otherwise would. He is of course greatly aided if he can have a subject-matter expert with him in the group and has developed skill in using his services. The leader's own function is largely a matter of awareness of the process in which he is the guide. This ability to help a group define its problem clearly, to help it to so proceed that members contribute their best thinking, and to encourage them to weigh all possible suggestions objectively can be developed in a comparatively short time."[1]

The Leader as Manager of Group Thinking

Many inexperienced leaders make their work hard by approaching it as a solo effort instead of as a cooperative enterprise. Half their difficulties would disappear if they reminded themselves that a good discussion is nothing more than a group undertaking to study a problem together. The leader is not there to be their teacher. His task is simply to watch over their effort so that the best uses are made of the time and resources available.

A leader who is just beginning to find his way may increase his confidence by learning before the meeting starts what persons present are able to be useful in the discussion. He will take mental note of one with special information bearing on the problem, and of others with skill in the analysis and organization of ideas, or who are fertile in suggestions. Such persons will usually be happy to accept his requests to help in special ways—in supplying facts, in summarizing, in representing points of view that might otherwise not get expressed. With such support for the leader, an apparent impasse in the talk which might otherwise prove embarrassing may easily become the most interesting moment, when the very best efforts of the whole group are enlisted.

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[1]From "The 'Inquiry' Visits Geneva Summer Schools." *Educational Survey,* March, 1932, p. 60.

Competent management of a discussion lasting probably not more than ninety minutes calls for a plan which is not too elaborate. Where the leader has not had the time to work out an advance outline, it will ordinarily be enough simply to bear in mind a few "guide questions," such as—

1. Precisely what is the problem we are discussing?
2. What conflicting points of view must we take into account?
3. What proposals looking toward solutions can we devise?
4. What tests should we apply to them?
5. On what points have we progressed toward agreement?
6. What conflicts remain for further study?

If most of the group are new to this method of work, it may be helpful to share this outline with them briefly at the beginning. It sometimes gives a sense of mastery for practical-minded persons to "know where they are going." In what follows let us address the leader as if he were a member of a leaders' group expecting to use these "guide questions" in the discussion sections of an institute.

(1) Locating the Problem

You will recall that for group thinking the problem should be stated as a question, and cast in terms which are close to the interests of the members. The particular problem selected is probably related to others in the total situation; and the relation should be made clear in the course of the discussion. At the beginning, however, it is enough if the problem selected is concrete and so limited that the group feel from the beginning that they "can get somewhere with it." If it meets these specifications let the members plunge into it after the briefest opening statement from you. At the end of a crowded hour they will be grateful to you for the time you saved by not making a speech.

If the initial phrasing is too vast or vague, try, if possible, to get a small group in advance to define it further. It may seem

best to bring forward several clear-cut possibilities from which the group may select quickly their own preferred point of departure. You will do well not to appear too wholly responsible for the definition, lest you find yourself on the defensive later if the problem proves unmanageable.

In a single session of an hour and a half this initial step should be completed in not more than ten or fifteen minutes.

(2) Examining Conflicting Interests

Occasionally a leader looks forward with dread to the possibility of an embarrassing silence just after the discussion is thrown open. Do not be alarmed by a pause of fifteen to twenty seconds: the thought that follows may be all the better for it. Above all things, do not keep on talking yourself in order to avoid such a silence.

The group will be ready to talk, however, once the thought moves to points where their live interests are touched. It usually pays, therefore, to introduce as quickly as possible *brief* questions designed to enlist those interests. Have in reserve a simple opening question or two, preferably phrased in the third person: *e.g.,* "Who are some of the people and groups most interested in this question?" "What are some of our acquaintances saying about it?"

At the beginning, invite answers which are brief. Encourage each new voice. Recognize quickly those responses which are merely variants of earlier statements and invite members with new ideas—especially those introducing conflict elements—to say enough to make themselves thoroughly clear.

Your own function during this stage is simple: to ask a *few* questions focussing on the conflict of interests in the problem; to recognize members; to identify each new element as it appears; and to supply occasional summary sentences, helping the group to see the growing network of interests to be taken into account. As indicated above, you may delegate these summaries to a competent member of the group.

(3) Developing Possible Solutions

By this time perhaps a third of your hour and a half is gone. As soon as main interests have been recognized, and while the listing is still active, move to the next stage: that of entertaining suggested possibilities toward solution. It is best if this advance can be made by reference to a previous remark by a member who has introduced the idea of possible courses of action.

During this stage you will be on the alert not to let a dispute about ascertainable facts between too or three ardent, encyclopaedic minds waste the precious time of the whole group. Quickly assign these items for investigation and report at the next session.

The way should now be clear for rapid identification of proposals for action. At this point you will probably see new light in the faces of some action-minded members who have up to now sat silent and perhaps a bit bored. When a proposal offered is already familiar to the group it may need little more than mention. When new or less familiar suggestions are made, you will do well to ask for some detail. Mark particularly *new combinations arising* from suggestions already made. It will help the group in the *evaluating* of proposals which is to follow if you here list or tabulate them according to some simple principle: for example, in ascending order from the least drastic to the most drastic.

During this process either you, or a member already assigned, will be alert to make the necessary *discriminations* so that at the end of this speech the group will see clearly which approaches to solution seem promising enough to warrant further study.

(4) What Tests Should We Apply?

In general, there will be two:

1. Why does the proposal seem desirable?
2. How will it work?

With younger groups especially, agreement as to the desirability of proposals that are appealingly phrased may be reached with an embarrassing promptness. One needs, of course, to

deal gently with convictions of any kind, and here you will rarely advance real discussion by challenging them directly. You may if necessary invite a question asking other opinions on the same point: but commonly the best way to get questions of *desirability* re-weighed is to discuss those of *workability*. This may involve asking such questions as these:

1. What would be some of the more immediate consequences of applying the plan?
2. What some of the more remote?
3. How quickly could the plan be applied?
4. At what points could it be most effectively attacked?
5. What specific considerations, such as cost, personnel, public support, would have to be considered?

(5) Agreements and Disagreements

You will find it helpful to have arranged your notes throughout the discussion, so that you can now answer the last two questions of the six in the guide outline above (p. 52). This summary should not take more than the last ten minutes of the session. On the other hand it should never be a breathless affair made to the accompaniment of closing notebooks; these minutes determine the final impression the members will carry off with them.

Recognize first real achievements in securing agreement. Do this generously but not extravagantly. As the very minimum, include all points, even if some be minor, on which explicit agreement was reached between persons or sections of the groups divided on other matters. You do well to recall these points in the identical language used in the discussion. Otherwise it sometimes happens that a well-intentioned but fluent summarizer restates the point in new terms not recognized by the central figures of the original conflict. Beyond this minimum, it is often helpful, if feelings become tense, to comment especially on agreements, stated or implied, as to *objectives*. In dealing with the international aspects of coal production in Europe, for example, it may be useful to note what in other cir-

cumstances might seem obvious—that all wish to find a solution which will permit the miners of all countries concerned to maintain their families in health and decency: or, in discussing international aspects of school textooks, that all have assented to the ideal that school children of each country should be taught to respect the citizens of all others. Of course, such interpretations should never outrun the facts, and should not descend to mere conventional politeness.

(6) Conflict Elements for Further Study

The matter of recognizing conflicts still remaining is both difficult and important. Some values to be achieved here are these:

To prevent the actual issues from being lost in a fog of fact-ignoring good-will;

To help every member feel that the discussion is not a subtle way of undermining his intellectual integrity.

To get the difficulty out into the open, in a new setting of facts and attitudes.

To note shifts of attitudes on questions which still resist solutions.

To indicate directions in which there seems to be hope for later solution.

To prepare the way for next moves toward further fact-gathering and study.

Not all discussions need start at the beginning of the "guide outline." Some groups already know the situation, and where the problem lies. Some even know exactly what their differences of opinion are. It may then be possible to begin with the differences and move on from there. A group may decide that no agreed action will be sought in the hour, but that all the time should be given to reducing their differences through adding information, and earnest interchange of thought on points of attitude and desire. As their leader you should have in mind clearly just what steps they may be assumed to have gone through and what they should be expected to achieve in the discussion before them. Sometimes the analysis of the situation is

taken care of by a preceding lecture, or by a report from a member of the group. Again, members can begin the discussion around alternate possibilities of action which may have been already drawn up by a speaker or a committee. It is interesting to see that from whatever point the discussion begins, it tends to follow through the same steps of clarifying the problem, bringing out differences in point of view, analyzing proposals, and introducing information and opinion in an effort toward reaching a common understanding or plan of action.

Getting Well-Distributed Participation

(1) Don't Talk Too Much Yourself

A natural fault you should watch against is that of being too much the center of the group. This is not due to egotism on your part but to circumstances in the leadership relation. It may be due to the manner of seating and working in the group. When the chairs are arranged in rectangular rows facing you, the members will act on their parliamentary habits and address "the chairman" instead of one another. One leader averts this by leaning back and assuming a pose of detached thought, once the speaking starts, and asserts himself only when there is guiding work to be done. You can shift attention from yourself to the problem by using a blackboard to focus the developing analysis. Another way is to let a competent member of the group, now and then, share your work of summarizing.

It is often inevitable that as leader you know a great deal more about the subject than the members do. In this case make clear to your group that you must play two rôles, that of guide and that of expert. What is more, definitely separate the two in your participation. When you speak as expert, *show* that you are dropping your rôle as discussion guide for the time being. Sometimes it is better for the members if the leader uses his additional knowledge only to make his guidance more discerning, and to let members use other resources for information. It may be difficult to do this, especially where the members enjoy leaning upon you as an authority.

Sometimes you find yourself unwittingly monopolizing the discussion because you have assumed a higher level of abstract thinking than most of your group are capable of maintaining. They can listen, but they cannot participate. When a leader is older than the group he must remember that aspects of the problem which appear most significant and fruitful to him are, perhaps, beyond the powers of the present group to discuss.

(2) Don't Let the Ready Talkers Monopolize

Almost every group has its loquacious member, its rambler, its person who has a good point to make but is too long in stating it. How shall you deal with these people?

Where the group is large, and somewhat formal, you can suggest a time limit for each speaker. A better result in large groups, however, seems to come from making the majority feel more at ease. Frequently the long-winded speaker can be stopped before elaboration has begun by such remarks as, "We shall take that point up when we discuss so-and-so." "What do others say to this?" "There are several who have not yet participated; let us hear from them." (You should be fairly sure of getting a contribution from the persons on whom you thus place responsibility for speaking.) Frequently the monopolizer can be shown how he is moving away from the central issue. Leniency with the rambler is disservice to the group. However, the leader cannot afford to be rude. When the speaker's point has been made and further talk is merely elaboration, the leader can interrupt to say, "Now is your point thus and so, Mr. X?" and allow time only for qualifications before moving on. Where a few members cling to the discussion of one phase of the matter, the leader can make a contribution which he continues into a summary and thus introduces the next point.

Where hands are raised, the continual hand-waver must expect to be overlooked occasionally. If this overlooking becomes obvious, offer some explanation, such as the need for response from others, etc. Sometimes the member's desire to take part can be turned to account by assigning him a special item to report on.

Remember that monopoly of discussion by one or a few is not always due to these persons themselves, but to the set-up of the group. Lack of specific preparation for discussion, lack of interest except on the part of a few, lack of sympathy with the leader, a level of discussion too high for the majority, or a seating arrangement that creates an "inner" (or "close") and an "outer" group, may tend inevitably toward over-participation by the few.

Introducing Information

If you have had good advance planning for information, you will have little trouble in getting it effectively introduced. The first question here is whether to get the information provided for in a separate session, or to get it delivered piecemeal in the process of discussion. You will be governed somewhat by the *kind* of information the group is needing from the specially qualified informant. He may be good at placing the issue before the group—showing its origin, explaining confusions in it, setting the tone and direction for a discussion to follow. Or, he may be a specialist in a certain area of fact, one who can go into revealing details, but who will need your art as a leader to get his facts *related* to the group's thinking.

Where you get the needed data separately presented, you may introduce variety by having it offered either in a lecture, or in the form of a symposium or debate. Bear in mind the danger of over-balancing the program on the side of providing ready-made ideas for your group. In general let *some* discussion come first. The members will demonstrate for themselves their need of more facts, and the leader can then help an outside authority to address his speech to their present level of information and interest.

Where members have done reading to report on in the group, get their factual contributions distributed at various points in the movement of thought so as not to slow it down too much.

Sometimes an outside authority can be brought right into the discussion group. If what he has to say can best be given all at once, let him lead off, even though the discussion which follows

will probably be more in the nature of a forum or debate. You may, however, let him remain silent in the group until questions arise which call for information not known to the members. As a matter of fact, something of exposition, forum, debate, and conversation, all appear from time to time within the study circle. However, the leader is responsible for guiding it toward discussion, and for turning the attention of the group back to an all-round view of the problem at hand.

Managing Tempo and the Demands on Time

As manager of the group's give-and-take you are attending to the *details* of the discussion, watching to get balance and spread among the speakers, and effective use of thought-discrimination and fact. You need also to attend to the march of time. In general the movement of thought in a group newly facing up to an issue divides into two phases: (1) that of seeing and analyzing it, and (2) that of thinking out what should be done about it. Unless you watch the time the group will dwell too long on the first phase, becoming pre-occupied with getting out testimony from one another, and defining the problem and points of view, with the result of huddling and short-circuiting its thought in the phase of evaluating the leads toward solution. Your part in getting the best use of the group's time may be sketched in the form of a few maxims—as follows:

Make clear in your own mind before the meeting what is the *objective* of the discussion, and what *kind of approach* should be made.

Put any materials which are to be introduced in the discussion into the hands of members early enough for the latter to think them through and present them smoothly.

Explain at the start just what is expected as to the length and the kind of contribution.

Get the group to rank the points in an order of importance for taking up in the discussion.

Do your summarizing at each phase so that you divide the time well between all the phases.

Cover minor points and transitions by a brief statement of your own.

Recognize a minor point but hold it over to be taken up later if there is time.

Warn the group where it seems to be moving into unrewarding matter.

Where the group is stopping too long over one point make your comment on something just said the occasion of moving on to the next point.

Politely and good-humoredly interrupt the speaker who is "running on."

Avoid offering a comment on each member's contribution.

When the talk is wasting time for lack of proper data, make arrangements for having the data brought in next time, and proceed with another phase of the matter.

With all your concern to get good speaking that moves briskly on, do not confuse every slowing down and pause in the talk as "dragging." The group needs for its best thinking a certain rhythm or alternation of tempo in the talk, so that episodes in which ideas, approaches, and challenging views have been rapidly pooled shall be followed by moments of slow and tentative reaction, of critical checking, and even of pause for personal reflection. Especially where the issue is complex, or where oppositions are deeply rooted, the speakers should be given moments to reëxamine their own minds so as to resume their parts with a reorganized outlook on the matter.

Dealing with Antagonisms in the Group

Even with the best of management you cannot prevent the talk, now and then, from running into sharp antagonisms. Indeed, one should not wish strong views to be expressed with a forced politeness that inhibits an honest revelation of feelings all around. It is an essential art in discussion to bring into the open various latent incompatibilities of attitude, interest, and point of view and to *develop* self-knowledge and detachment in dealing wilth them.

As leader your part is to treat an emotional opposition as an invitation to general self-scrutiny. Deep differences of attitude

are evidently underlying the logical rationalizations of the disputants. They may involve old resentments of class against class, or of race against race—resentments springing from rooted beliefs that such-and-such people are *the* standing obstacles to the well-being of one's own group. Such smoldering animosities are only glossed over in the ordinary public talk of an international conference. In your discussion group you must help the members to see bad feelings as part of the realities of their problem. Once they are disclosed, you can suggest a moment of silence—such as the Society of Friends regularly use in their business meetings—so that each member can look in upon his own state of attitude and opinion and see just what his feeings mean in view of the needed adjustments.

"The chairman," says Frank Walser,[1] "should be a serious student of human opposition." He should be quick to recognize the commonest causes of antagonism. First comes pride—in its subtler manifestations. Pride makes a disputant stubborn, since he feels that a change of attitude on his part will look like "knuckling under." Then there is "the insincere appeal to justice—used so often by the weaker side to get something from the stronger." Finally there is the form of argument that *questions the motive* of those who profess a certain view. This is a sure starter of embittered words.

You can usually detect a rising antagonism in the group by sharpened intonations of voice. Sometimes, however, a taunt or angry rejoinder bursts suddenly in an exchange between speakers. You can then do three things that will induce a spirit of scientific listening instead of recrimination. (1) Draw the angry remark to yourself by asking the group to listen with you in an effort to understand well. The speaker's aggressiveness will lessen as he finds himself well listened to. (2) Sum up his grounds for resentment in a quiet voice and in less emotive words. (3) Remind the group that frankness such as this brings out elements of strain in their problem, to understand which they must seek to understand themselves.

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[1] *The Art of Conference.* Harpers.

APPENDIX B

Reading for Discussion Leaders

Discussion Method

ELLIOTT, H. S., The Process of Group Thinking. *Association Press,* $2.25.

ELLIOTT, H. S., Group Discussion in Religious Education, *Association Press,* $.50; 12 for $5.00.

EWING, R. L., Methods of Conducting Forums and Discussions. *Association Press,* $1.00.

FOLLETT, MARY P., The New State, Chapters 2 and 3, "The Group Idea." *Longmans, Green & Co.,* $3.50.

KELLY, HERBERT, The Object and Method of Conference. *World Conference on Faith and Order, Box 226, Boston, Mass.* Also, Notes on Controversies, in *The Inquiry,* August, 1925.

PARKES, J. M., International Conferences, *International Student Service,* $.50.

SHEFFIELD, ALFRED DWIGHT, Training for Group Experience. *The Inquiry,* $1.50.

WALSER, FRANK, Art of Conference, *Harper Bros.,* $3.00.

Social Thinking in the Discussion

I. THE EXPECTATION OF A GROUP PROCESS THROUGH DISCUSSION

A. Situations creatively changed through "power with" rather than "power over" people

1. *"Situation" as field of control*

THOMAS AND ZNANIECKI, The Polish Peasant, Methodological Note, Vol. 1, p. 67 ff., *Alfred A. Knopf, 2 Vols.,* $10.00.

FOLLETT, MARY P., Creative Experience, pp. 180-181, 186-187, *Longmans, Green & Co.,* $3.00.

Dewey, John, Democracy and Education, pp. 180-192. *The Macmillan Company,* $2.25.

Hader, John and Lindeman, E. C., Dynamic Social Research, *Harcourt Brace & Co.,* $3.50.

2. *New values from conflict*

Coöperative Technique for Conflict. *The Inquiry,* $.20.

Follett, Mary P., The New State, pp. 96-97, 186-194. Creative Experience, pp. 171-172, 300-302. (See publisher above.)

Lindeman, E. C., Social Discovery, pp. 144-157. Social Education, *passim. The New Republic,* $1.00 each. Community Conflict, *The Inquiry,* $1.50.

Krabbe, H., The Modern Idea of the State, Introduction lxiii-lxv. *D. Appleton & Company,* $5.00.

3. *The expert and the lay experience of the group*

Follett, Mary P., Creative Experience, pp. 3-30. (See publisher above.)

Lippmann, Walter, Public Opinion, pp. 223, 370-371, 375, 383-384. *The Macmillan Company,* $2.50.

Dewey, John, Democracy and Education, pp. 216-227. (See publisher above.)

Lindeman, E. C., Social Discovery, pp. 92, 262-274, 308-316. (See publisher above.) The Meaning of Adult Education, pp. 125-133. *The New Republic,* $1.00.

B. Integrative decisions

1. *Distinguished from compromise*

Follett, Mary P., The New State, pp. 114-115, 156-157. Creative Experience, pp. 156-178, 182-183. (See publisher above.)

Lindeman, E. C., Social Discovery, pp. 306-308. (See publisher above.)

Wolfe, A. B., Conservatism, Radicalism, and Scientific Method, pp. 202-203, *The Macmillan Company,* $3.50.

Ellwood, C. A., The Psychology of Human Society, p. 240. *D. Appleton & Company,* $3.00.

2. *Revaluation processes*

Busch, H. M., Leadership in Group Work, *Association Press,* $1.75.

Overstreet, H. A., Influencing Human Behavior, pp. 163, 275. *W. W. Norton & Co.,* $3.00.

Coe, G. A., Psychology of Religion, p. 230. *University of Chicago Press,* $2.25.

Kilpatrick, W. H., Foundations of Method, p. 197. *The Macmillan Company,* $2.00.

Follett, Mary P., Creative Experience, p. 172. (See publisher above.)

Thomson, M. K,. The Springs of Human Action, pp. 250-265. *D. Appleton & Company,* $3.00.

II. Emotional Complications of Response

A. Personal and group bases of response

1. *Attitude*

Wolfe. A. B., Conservatism, Radicalism, and Scientific Method, pp. 201, 215-216, 219-220. (See publisher above.)

Ellwood, C. A., The Psychology of Human Society, pp. 81-82, 152-153. (See publisher above.)

Young, Kimball, Social Attitudes. *Henry Holt & Company, Inc.,* $3.00.

2. *Group bond*

Lindeman, E. C., Social Discovery, pp. 193-197, 209-210, 220-221. (See publisher above.)

Gault, R. H., Social Psychology, pp. 18-19. *Henry Holt & Company,* il. $2.50; *Students' Ed.* $2.00.

Ellwood, C. A., The Psychology of Human Society, pp. 157-158. (See publisher above.)

3. *Social differentiation*

KALLEN, H. M., Culture and Democracy in the United States, pp. 170-171. *Horace Liveright,* $3.00.

OVERSTREET, H. A., Influencing Human Behavior, pp. 175-176. (See publisher above.)

NORTH, CECIL, Social Differentiation, pp. 31-32, 51. *University of North Carolina Press,* $2.50.

8. Types of complications to be reckoned with

1. *Invasions of "self" feeling*

(Face-saving, showing off, getting even, rationalizing.)

ROBINSON, J. H., The Mind in the Making, pp. 40-48. *Harper & Brothers,* $1.00.

OVERSTREET, H. A., Influencing Human Behavior, pp. 190-193. (See publisher above.)

HART, BERNARD, Psychology of Insanity, p. 86. *The Macmillan Company,* $1.00.

2. *Reactions to Prejudice?*

(Habits of authority, submission, revolt.)

ALLPORT, FLOYD H., Social Psychology, pp. 286, 249. *Houghton Mifflin Co.,* $2.50.

THOMAS AND ZNANIECKI, The Polish Peasant, pp. 128-140. (See publisher above.)

WOLFE, A. B., Conservatism, Radicalism, and Scientific Method, pp. 35, 49, 134, 173, 189, 54-60, 97-98. (See publisher above.)

BOGARDUS, E. S., Essentials of Social Psychology, pp. 114-115, 118. *J. R. Miller, 3566 University Ave., Los Angeles,* $2.00.

3. *Clique reactions*

OVERSTREET, H. A., Influencing Human Behavior, p. 177. (See publisher above.)

Cooley, C. H., Social Process, p. 252. *Charles Scribner's Sons,* $2.00.

Ellwood, C. A., The Psychology of Human Society, pp. 179-185. (See publisher above.)

Clark, E. L., The Art of Straight Thinking. *D. Appleton-Century Company,* $3.00.

C. Difficulties in expression

1. *Blame-reactions*

Wolfe, A. B., Conservatism, Radicalism, and Scientific Method, pp. 171, 231-232. (See publisher above.)

2. *Platitudes and slogans*

Lippmann, Walter, Public Opinion, pp. 90-91, 96-100, 111, 151. (See publisher above.)

Overstreet, H. A., Influencing Human Behavior, pp. 129-132, 135-139. (See publisher above.)

3. *Fixed ideas*

Overstreet, H. A., Influencing Human Behavior, pp. 280-281. (See publisher above.)

Richards, I. A., Practical Criticism. *Harcourt Brace & Co.,* $4.00.

III. Basic Concepts of Group Experience

Coyle, Grace, Social Process in Organized Groups. *Richard R. Smith,* $2.00.

Eubank, Earle E., Concepts of Sociology. *D. C. Heath & Co.,* $4.80.

Krueger, E. T., and Reckless, Walter C., Social Psychology. *Longmans Green & Co.,* $3.00.

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